

## EDITORIAL: Death of a bad bill

There are two ways to judge the worthiness of a legislative bill - the politics behind it and the policy it would produce.

The two aren't one and the same. A bill that's sleazily sneaked through the legislative process can still become a worthy law. And one that's passed honorably and with the best of intentions can, nonetheless, still prove disastrous.

But occasionally there comes along a dreadful piece of legislation that fails on both counts - one that's sleazy in its origins and disastrous in its effect.

Such is the case with AB 212 by Assemblyman Felipe Fuentes, D-Sylmar - a bad bill that came to its rightful demise Monday.

On paper, AB 212 is the eye-glazing stuff of land-use wonkery, restricting the ability of a city (Los Angeles) to make zone changes in areas where the community plan is not consistent with the city's general plan. What that means, in plain English, is that state law would supersede local planning decisions in some particular instances.

Or, to put it more accurately, state law would supersede local planning decisions in one particular instance.

That's because AB 212 isn't so much about changing state land-use policies, but paving the way for one well-connected developer to build 229 homes in the Verdugo Hills.

A little background:

On the site of the Verdugo Hills Golf Course, developer MWH Development Corp. wants to build a massive new housing development. Neighbors, who want to preserve the more rural quality of the area, are opposed, so last year L.A. City Councilwoman Wendy Greuel proposed amending the city plan to limit development to 12 homes.

Enter Fuentes, who, even though his district doesn't include the golf course, has proposed AB 212. The bill is narrowly worded to apply only to Los Angeles, and a supporting analysis prepared for a Senate hearing cites the Verdugo Hills controversy in the background and explanation of the bill. In other words, its very purpose

is to clear the way for the MWH development.

Which should surprise no one, since MWH actually sponsored the bill. And, although Fuentes denies there's a connection, MWH principals and other business associates backing the bill have reportedly contributed more than \$16,000 to his political campaigns in the past two years.

Thus AB 212 fails on both counts: Its origins are sleazy, with a politician doing the dirty work for well-connected developers who just so happen to fund his campaigns. And its effect would be awful, stripping land-use decisions from local communities, where they rightly belong.

The bill was quietly working its way through Sacramento before L.A. leaders got tipped off and began to kick up a fuss. Their outrage paid off, with Fuentes backing down Monday, and yanking AB 212 from the legislative calendar, thus ensuring its quiet political death.

To which L.A. can reply: Good riddance. This was a truly bad bill, in every sense of the word.